

## ANGELS AND SPIRITS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE "WHITE DOVE."

The Bible is the most wonderful of books, in its adaptation to the exigencies of all times, and the individual wants of the human mind. At the present day, when a morbid excitement exists, in wandering minds, with regard to spiritual manifestations, and a thirst for the marvels and wondrous revealments of another life, how satisfactory it is to turn to the Divine Word with a full assurance of its truth, and slake this thirst of the mind at a pure fountain. What beautiful stories of spiritual manifestations are everywhere found in the sacred record; and who can doubt, after reading them, that angels and spirits are our constant attendants, interested in all of our states and conditions, possessed of warm and active sympathies, which they exercise in the most effective ways, even when we are wholly unconscious of their presence? This comforting fact was revealed to the early Christians in the most palpable and tangible manner; and no one can doubt it, who accepts the testimony of the Apostles. For instance: "Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold the Angel of the Lord came upon him; and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, 'Arise up quickly.' And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, 'Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals;' and so he did. And he saith unto him, 'Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.' And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him."

Who can read this narration, and doubt that angels can act upon matter? Or that they bend their high intelligence, through love, to the trivial wants and necessities of our outer life? It seems very wonderful that so powerful an angel, whose mere presence filled the dark prison with light, should bid Peter *gird himself, and bind on his sandals, and cast his garment about him*, and even Peter thought it a dream or vision; but the ponderous iron gate, that had opened before the will of his bright attendant, and the free, open street in which he found himself, were tangible proofs of the material actuality of his experience.

And yet the angel could not have been in a material body. Had he been thus subject to the laws of matter, the iron gate would have been to him impassable and impregnable. He was acting from a higher and more potent sphere of existence upon matter. And this narration is a wonderful revelation of the powers of the spiritual corporeity. The angel was in a human form, and so like to a man in his sympathies, that he remembered that Peter would need his sandals and outer garment in the street. And yet his connection with the material body of Peter must have been through the spirit of Peter. Like as

a man walks in his sleep must Peter have walked forth from the prison—in a state of spiritual wakefulness and in a bodily unconsciousness—but suddenly the body ceases to sleep, and, lo! the angel is no longer seen; and Peter finds himself not chained in the prison between two soldiers, but free in the open street, and goes to seek his friends. The lovers of the marvellous surely have food for wonder in this account, and they would find many such in the Acts of the Apostles.

And that the spirit of man may have consciousness in scenes and places where his body is not, is abundantly proved in the account of Philip who discoursed with the eunuch who was travelling on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. But "when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus."

It must have been that the spirit of Philip was brought into a state of conscious intercourse with the spirit of the eunuch. And this is a revelation fraught with the most consoling and beautiful truths. How often, when we yearn for an understanding of what we read in the Divine Word, it may be that a bright angel or a wise man approaches us in the spirit and guides us into perceptions of the truth as it is in Jesus, while we remain unconscious in the body of our delightful companionship. And we have yet a higher proof that the spirit, clothed in materiality, may take cognizance of things without the sphere of its material senses. When our blessed Lord walked the earth, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," He saw that Nathaniel prayed under the fig-tree, when as yet he had not approached within the range of His material vision. And in many other instances He revealed this power of discerning spiritually that which the laws of matter prevented His discerning materially. Indeed, through the whole of the New Testament runs this revelation, that man, as a spirit, possesses powers far superior to those with which he is endowed through his material organization. The angels that were seen by the women at the sepulchre had rolled the stone away from its mouth (which seemed immovable to the women) by the mere force of their will. And what a beautiful revelation are these angels in human forms! and "clothed in shining garments!"

How perfectly they set at naught the vague theory that the spirit of man is a vapor or ether, floating in space, without form or vitality, awaiting its final reunion with matter! How is it possible for such a supposition to stand in the light of the Bible? How can we read of the resurrection of the Lord, who, after death, appeared as a man—endowed with the same beautiful sympathies—the same identity of individuality—and yet doubt that we shall live the self same men, our identity perfectly apparent to our own consciousness, and to the consciousness of our associates? And how clear and beautiful grows this question of spiritual intercourse, in the light of our Lord's life upon the earth! That He was in a conscious association

with beings not of this world, is apparent through His whole history, and was foreseen from the beginning, for David declared that "He shall give His angels charge over Thee." And the disciples also perceived, in His great earthly temptations, that "angels ministered unto Him;" and He promised to guileless hearts that they should "see the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Thus man, as may be seen when he is in a state of full and perfect order, may be conscious in that "kingdom of Heaven" that is within him.

But the Divine Word is not without its warning voice to those who heedlessly, in a state of self-will, force themselves by abnormal means into this state of consciousness.

The woman of Endor, who was possessed of a familiar spirit, by whom she was enabled to communicate, through thought, or spiritual presence, with Samuel, produced no good effect upon Saul, when she acted as his *medium* in bringing him into communication with Samuel. Saul, by evil of life, had been cut off from influx from God and the angels, but from his own self-will he determined to re-open this communication through means external to his own existence. And no one can read the history of his interview without feeling that he committed a sin. But in those narrations of angels (who were commissioned of God) speaking to men, a feeling of blessedness pervades the mind. Who can read without delight of Mary, when the angel came in unto her, and said, "Hail! thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee?"

And in the narration immediately preceding this, Zacharias "saw an angel of the Lord standing on the right hand of the altar of incense," and the "angel said unto him, 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.'"

There is something joy-giving in imagining the presence of these bright and beautiful messengers of Heaven, and they seem to open to us a world of such bright existences—existences of far more actuality and power than the clay moulds we see moving around us. And it is not good that we should ignore the spirit-world and its manifestations. We shrink with disgust and aversion from those profane mediums who would wrest from man the foundations of his belief in the holy Word of God, who deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek to flood the world with a false and demoralizing philosophy. But these things grow out of the very nature of man. In this world, we see the good fall into natural associations with the good, and the evil with the evil. And in our spiritual life, also, "like must seek its like." If, then, a bad man, one who does not implicitly believe the sanctities of the Divine Word, and acknowledge Christ as his God, should, by his own act, force himself into a state of spiritual consciousness, by himself, inducing certain mental states, or by mesmeric influences inducing an outer unconsciousness, how naturally, and as a necessary consequence, he should find himself associated with beings of like thoughts and feelings, and how they would de-

light to draw him into an open expression of the concealed enmity of his heart to things divine and holy.

But the good and pure man has no such self-will—he prays to the Lord, and reads his Bible, in that beautiful spirit of obedience in which Zacharias and Elizabeth were, who were "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." And if to such an one an angel should come, it would be an angel from the presence of God, bringing some "glad tidings."

In the present wonderful crisis in human affairs, men run into dangerous extremes. The credulous are led away by too ready a credence in marvels, and the rational are so shocked by these marvels, that, rejecting the testimony of the Divine Word, they pronounce them all impostures and impossibilities. But this is not good; man's *rationality* is not reason, it is simply the faculty of drawing conclusions from external circumstances: his *reason* is a high, inner spiritual perception. Through the faculty of rationality, or ratiocination, man can acquire no spiritual knowledge, for spiritual facts do not come within the cognizance of his rationality. But to his *reason* revelation submits a vast amount of spiritual facts, which he may confirm or deny, according to the moral state of his reason; he is left in a state of full and perfect freedom to do so. But this state of the reason depends wholly on the innate affections and desires of the man, for what he loves he thinks of—hence thought is simply the manifestation of an affection. If a man loves Heaven and the angels, he thinks of them; he is more readily made cognizant of their existence, for he realizes in himself a spirit which is within the body, and one with it, and yet entirely distinct and superior to it. In such a man reason can receive the truths of revelation and confirm them, because they accord with his desires and the testimony of his inner consciousness. But if a man love only the earth and the things of the earth, he is bound down to the sphere of his external rationality; he feels in himself no witness of spiritual verities; hence he rejects all mention of them, and regards them as insanities unworthy the attention of a rational mind. And there is yet another class, whose inner affections are so evil that they realize in themselves a spirit that can scoff at the divine. They seek an open intercourse with spirits that will confirm them in their unbelieving tendencies: they delight in those declarations from the spiritual world that deny all the divine facts of the Christian religion. How true it is, "if they believe not Moses and the Prophets, they would not believe, though one should speak to them from the dead." For in the spirit like speaks to like.

Happily, there is a standard by which all spirits may be tried. The Bible is the rule by which they are to be measured, that is, the *written* Word of God, and stands fixed and unchanged amid all the transitions of the human mind. It is the sure anchor of faith to us—and while no future spiritual revelation can ever set this infinite and holy Word aside, we can reject or receive spiritual communications simply as

they accord with the truths and revelations of the Divine Word or not.

That a new era is opening upon the world cannot be doubted or denied; one might as well deny the wonders of the electric telegraph, as to deny all of the testimony brought forward to prove that at this day spirits do speak with men. There is no safety in an obstinate denial of the fact. It is better that the wise and good should look at it in the light of truth, and see if its perversions lead to so deplorable an insanity; that on the other hand, if such a thing should, in the providence of God, come also to the believing Christian, might it not lead to a beautiful wisdom of life. If it might be, that men *could* live in an open speaking intercourse with angels, would not life be a beautiful blessing upon the earth? for death would then have lost its sting and the grave its victory. If the hearts of the disciples were so comforted by seeing, after death, the beloved person of their Lord, would not the hearts of many weary mourners be also comforted in seeing their beloved dead? Could the mother weep for the angel-child revealed to her in its new and glorious life and wondrous beauty? Ah! no—angels and spirits could then minister with new power to the hearts and minds of men.